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C A RUSSELL

## One Hundred Years Ago

(with extracts from the *Alpine Journal*)

With the milder weather in Alpine regions has come the avalanche danger, and catastrophes are reported from many districts. A hot sun is loosening the snow on the mountains, which is the heaviest that has fallen for thirty years, and avalanches are falling in all directions.

The hazardous conditions recorded during the early months of 1907 were experienced in many parts of the Alps and very little winter climbing was undertaken. On 20 January Miss Marie Hampson-Simpson accompanied by Gustav Hasler, her future husband; and Fritz Amatter reached the summit of the Schreckhorn and on the same day Gino Carugati and his wife with Joseph and Laurent Petigax completed the first winter ascent and traverse of the north, higher summit of the Aiguilles Marbrées on the frontier ridge near the Col du Géant.

Several weeks later, on 26 March, Professor F F Roget and Marcel Kurz with Maurice Cretetz completed the first ski ascent<sup>1</sup> of the Aiguille du Chardonnet. Five days later the same party made the first ascent of the Grand Combin under winter conditions, using ski from the Panossière hut to the foot of the Col du Meiten. Other peaks ascended for the first time with the aid of ski included the Allalinhorn on 1 April, by Alfred Hurter and Max Stahel with Oskar and Othmar Supersaxo.

The winter months were followed by long periods of unsettled weather which continued for much of the climbing season. H V Reade, who arrived in the Bernese Alps on 7 July, recalled that

The year 1907 was one of uncertain weather – one of those seasons when it makes all the difference whether one climbs on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, or on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, and when one can never foresee a week ahead the condition in which one's peak will be.

As in previous years a number of new routes was completed, an early success in the Graian Alps being recorded by Henri Mettrier who on 17 July with Joseph Antoine and Jules Favre made the first ascent of the steep north-west face of the Dent Parrachée.

On the Italian side of Mont Blanc, also on 17 July, Karl Blodig with Laurent Croux ascended Punta Baretto,<sup>2</sup> on the lower section of the Brouillard ridge, by way of the unclimbed west face. A few days later, on 23 July, Antonio Castelnuovo accompanied by Anselmo Fiorelli made the

first ascent of the rock needle now named Punta Castelnuovo, the highest point of Les Dames Anglaises – the group of pinnacles on the Peuterey ridge. Elsewhere in the Mont Blanc range on 10 August Geoffrey Winthrop Young with Josef Knubel made the first recorded complete traverse of the classic ridge between the Aiguille du Midi and the Aiguille du Plan.

Young and Knubel then moved to the Pennine Alps where on 21 August, accompanied by C D Robertson and Heinrich Pollinger, they forced a route up the east face of the Zinalrothorn to reach the upper section of the north ridge. In the Bernese Alps on 4 August a successful expedition was undertaken by J P Farrar and H V Reade who made the first ascent of the north ridge of the Gross Grünhorn. To the east in the Dolomites on 16 July Karl Plaichinger and Hans Teifel completed an outstanding new route on the Sassolungo – the Langkofel – by climbing the east tower of the north face.

Following the completion of the first Simplon Tunnel<sup>3</sup> work on another major engineering project continued throughout the year. The construction of the Lötschberg Tunnel<sup>4</sup> under the Bernese Alps from Kandersteg to Goppenstein had been approved to provide a rail link between the Bern region and the Simplon line in the Rhône valley.

During the year several expeditions were undertaken in other mountain ranges. In the Caucasus Dr Vittorio Ronchetti and Dr Ferdinando Colombo visited the Adai Khokh region. After a spell of bad weather they succeeded, on 18 July, in climbing a peak of some 3960m in the Mamison group.

In April Tom Longstaff, with the guides Alexis and Henri Brocherel, returned to Almora in northern India to commence his second expedition to the Himalaya. Longstaff was accompanied on this occasion by A L Mumm and C G Bruce, the climbing party being completed by Mumm's guide Moritz Inderbilen and a number of Gurkhas from Bruce's regiment. Addressing the Alpine Club in the following year Longstaff explained that

Last summer Bruce, Mumm, and I intended to celebrate the jubilee of the Club by attempting the ascent of Everest, or at least by making the first exploration of its unknown glaciers from the Tibetan side. In this scheme we received the most cordial support from the President and Council of the Royal Geographical Society; but in spite of their efforts on our behalf, and of support from India, this expedition was vetoed by the Home Government. I must admit that, great as this disappointment was, it was with a certain feeling of relief that I found my alternative, a campaign in Garhwal, accepted by the others...

After establishing a base in the Dhauli valley an initial exploration of the ridge and glaciers between Dunagiri (7066m) and Changabang (6866m) was completed by Longstaff and Bruce with the two Brocherels and four Gurkhas. Longstaff and Mumm then explored the Trisul glacier and on 12 June after camping at a height of some 5320m Longstaff, the Brocherels

and Karbir Burathoki, one of the Gurkhas, reached the summit of Trisul (7120m) – the highest summit attained at that time.<sup>5</sup> After this outstanding achievement and an unsuccessful attempt by Longstaff to reach the Nanda Devi Sanctuary by way of the Rishiganga gorge the party investigated the approaches to Kamet (7756m). Bruce and Mumm then left for the Srinagar district where on 4 September they climbed Haramukh (5142m) near the Sind valley. During August Longstaff completed his examination of the southern and western approaches to Trisul commenced during his previous expedition, making a number of valuable corrections to the existent maps.

Later in the year in the Kangchenjunga region the Norwegians Carl Rubenson and Monrad Aas made a determined attempt to climb Kabru (7315m). On 20 October they reached a height of some 7285m near the north-eastern summit before being forced to retreat by intense cold and a violent wind. Another visitor to this region was Dr Alexander Kellas who in September with European guides made unsuccessful attempts to climb Simvu (6815m) and to reach the Nepal Gap (6300m) on the north ridge of Kangchenjunga (8586m).

In the Southern Alps of New Zealand the Rev H E Newton and Dr Ebenezer Teichelmann accompanied by the guide Alex<sup>6</sup> Graham explored the Franz Josef and Fox glaciers, making the first ascent of Douglas Peak (3087m) on 28 January and, on 4 February, reaching the summit of the unclimbed Torres Peak (3165m). Other peaks ascended for the first time included Mount Haast (3140m) and Mount Lendenfeld (3203m), both climbed on 26 February by Newton and Graham. In the Canadian Rockies in September L M Earle and his party with Eduard Feuz senior and Gottfried Feuz made the first ascent of Mount Douglas (3235m) a conspicuous peak in the Clearwater group at the head of Red Deer River.

In Britain notable new ascents were undertaken in all the principal regions. In Wales during September J M Archer Thomson and E S Reynolds completed *Avalanche Route*, an exposed climb on the East Buttress of Lliwedd. In the Lake District on 7 July H B Lyon, J Stables and A S Thomson opened 'B' Route, the second of the alphabetical lines on Gimmer Crag. On the Isle of Skye in June A P Abraham and H Harland established *Cioch Direct*, a popular route to the famous rock pinnacle on the face of Sron na Ciche.

Other events of note during the year included the formation of the Ladies' Alpine Club<sup>7</sup> with Mrs Aubrey Le Blond as the first President and celebrations to mark the Jubilee of the Alpine Club:<sup>8</sup> an exhibition of Alpine paintings and drawings by past and present members was held at the Club's premises in Savile Row and the Jubilee Winter Dinner took place on 17 December in the Great Hall of Lincoln's Inn. It seems appropriate to conclude this account with an extract from a speech on that occasion by D W Freshfield, who proposed a toast to the Mountaineering Societies of the World.



129. Members of Tom Longstaff's party on the summit ridge of Trisul, 12 June 1907. (*T G Longstaff*)

... there is a broad field in the future for mountain societies. They have to do for the mountains of the world what has been done in the last half-century for the Alps.

Will the company which dines here fifty years hence include the conqueror of Mount Everest? Why not? We have raised what I may call 'the man-level' from 16,000 to 24,000ft. There only remain 5,000ft. more to be overcome.

#### REFERENCES

1. A ski ascent is defined by Sir Arnold Lunn as 'an expedition on which ski were used until the foot of the final rock or ice ridges.'
2. Named by Blodig, whose party had made the first ascent of the north ridge of Mont Brouillard on 11 July 1906, in honour of Martino Baretta who with Jean Joseph Maquignaz had climbed the south ridge of that peak and completed the first ascent of the neighbouring, lower peak on 28 July 1880.
3. The second, parallel tunnel was opened on 4 December 1921.
4. Construction had commenced in October 1906.
5. W W Graham's claim to have reached the summit of Kabru (7315m) in 1883 has never received official recognition.
6. Graham was known to everyone as Alec.
7. The merger of the Ladies' Alpine Club with the Alpine Club was completed on 31 March 1975.
8. The Club had been founded on 22 December 1857.